



## **Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee**

### **Minutes**

Date: Mar 16th, 2022

Time: 7:15PM

Location: Via Zoom conference

Attendees:

*Executive committee:* Christopher Tonkin (chair), Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Adam MacNeill, Doug Mayo-Wells (secretary), Scott Smith (TAC liaison)

*Town of Arlington:* Daniel Amstutz (Sr Transportation Planner)

*Members of the public:* Jim Cartreine, Linda Epstein (resident), Len Greenberg, Jes Slavin (communications coordinator, MassBike) Petru Sofio (youth member-at-large)

Reference materials:

Department of Planning & Community Development presentation for 03-16-22 meeting:

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/60247>

#### **1. Greetings and Introductions, ground rules for online meetings.**

Christopher Tonkin advised that the meeting is held remotely related to COVID-19 measures adopted during the State of Emergency. Tonkin notified attendees that Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved. Tonkin confirmed the committee members and others in attendance for the meeting.

## 2. Reappointment of Executive Board members

Tonkin: Planning to extend all 6 current executive board members (Johnson, Kobaslija, MacNeill, Mayo-Wells, Smith, Tonkin) for an additional 3 year term.

## 3. Approval of the outstanding minutes for previous meetings

Scott Smith moves to accept minutes from March 2022 and November 2021, with proposed amendments by Daniel Amstutz and Scott Smith

Muris Kobaslija seconds; roll call vote is taken

Motion carries, none opposed

## 4. BLUEbikes special appropriations warrant article

Daniel Amstutz clarifies that there is no need for ABAC members to attend the Finance Committee meeting which is happening this evening although he will leave this meeting in half an hour to attend it. ABAC members are welcome to observe, but it is unlikely public comment will be permitted. Jenny Raitt (Director of Planning & Community Development) will introduce the article, then the Finance Committee can ask questions. The goal is not to get into issues of policy.

Muris Kobaslija indicates he plans to attend and observe (which will not break quorum for this meeting).

Scott Smith raises an additional talking point, economic impact to the town: If you get a Bluebike at Alewife and want to patronize a business in Arlington, you need somewhere to dock it in Arlington.

Daniel Amstutz says that is a good point, but hard to make a numbers-based case for.

## 5. General updates from Daniel

### a. Minuteman Bikeway Planning Project update

Public was meeting held on March 2nd, summarized work to-date, about 35 attendees. Recording will be available through Arlington Community Media, Inc. (ACMI).

Recommendations are being developed, expected in May, final public meeting will likely be scheduled in mid-June, prior to project wrap-up (and after Town Meeting).

b. Mystic River to Bikeway feasibility study update

Next public meeting on March 30th, will present alternatives and cross-sections of the trail for the proposed route. Existing conditions report will be released shortly, focus group meeting on March 23rd (including Phil Goff from Everywhere Arlington Liveable Streets, Petru Sofio from Arlington High School, David Watson (principal WatsonActive LLC, former member of Arlington Redevelopment Board, former Executive Director of MassBike)). Project meetings with DCR, MassDOT will follow through May/June with the last public meeting in June before the project concludes on June 30th.

Scott Smith has a conflict on March 30th and wonders if materials will be available to review prior to the meeting and whether it may be possible to join the focus group.

Daniel Amstutz says it may be possible to join the focus group but it is already somewhat large (about 15 people). Materials will definitely be posted after the meeting but not necessarily before (still being revised).

c. Bikeway EcoCounter trip data

Daniel Amstutz cautions that some of the year-over-year data in the Swan Place Eco Counter report does not reflect the data outages and is imprecise, but still indicates overall trends. Over half a million trips were logged in 2021, which is lower than might be expected, likely due to continuing effects of the pandemic. Nearly 300K bike trips, nearly 270K pedestrian trips, not including any data from March (data lost due to dead battery, or pedestrian data from late July/August and in late October (data lost due to insect infestation of the counter).

The data suggest that walking trips are somewhat more resilient than biking to waves of the pandemic (and more people continue to walk through the winter than bike). Still have not equaled pre-pandemic peak trip volumes (likely still seeing less commuter traffic on bikeway).

Christopher Tonkin asks if there are steps we can take to avoid losing a month's worth of data in the future.

Daniel Amstutz advises that email alerts are configured when data is being lost. MassDOT paid for the battery replacement, but that took a bit of time. When insects are interfering, need to see that the counts have dropped, but now know to look for that.

Christopher Tonkin suggests it would be good to train more individuals in the bug removal procedure. Will discuss offline.

Scott Smith mentions that time-of-day data is still flatter than before the pandemic (not showing rush hour peaks to the same level) and that the bike racks at Alewife are not as full as previously (even in March).

Christopher Tonkin mentions that subway volume also remains lower.

Len Greenberg suggests analyzing data by weekday vs. weekend use. Daniel Amstutz will include that graph in future presentations.

d. Bluebikes trip data

Total trips so far in 2022 is 550, which is significantly outpacing 2021 (3 stations operating through winter), and the rest should be redeployed in early April.

Reviewing the entire system data for 2021, nearly 3 million trips. The colors on the histogram in the presentation indicate membership levels (orange=yearly membership, red=monthly memberships). The green line indicates average trip duration.

To benchmark ridership levels, Boston's peak volume is approximately 100,000 trips/month.

e. Administrative note

Per the Governor's extension of the executive order about virtual meetings, this committee may continue to meet virtually until July 15. Hybrid remains a challenge, how to enable equal participation from participants in the room and attending remotely.

Christopher Tonkin suggests an in-person gathering at some point, possibly outdoors.

## 6. MassBike Charlie Proctor Memorial ride

Jes Slavin explains that the Charlie Proctor memorial ride is planned for Sunday May 29. It is a slow-paced charity ride, and part of the Minuteman Bikeway is included in the proposed route. MassBike requests a letter of support from ABAC and guidance from ABAC as to whether MassBike should discuss the ride at the upcoming Tri-Town meeting.

Christopher Tonkin expresses ABAC's support. Lexington has guidance for requesting event use of the Bikeway. Arlington prepared a similar document, but it was never formally adopted. Galen (Mook, Executive Director, MassBike) had indicated that he was going to communicate directly with the Town Manager to make sure the Town was apprised of the event.

Jes Slavin clarifies that the proposed 20-mile route goes through all three Bikeway communities (starts at Tufts boathouse, terminates in Bedford). Event participation will be capped at 100, and riders will not all start at the same time. MassBike plans to have staff to monitor water stops, to ensure riders completely exit the bikeway. The ride is planned to start at 9am and conclude by 2pm.

Jack Johnson advises clarifying in any communication to the Town that it should be a low-impact event.

Christopher Tonkin asks if it may be appropriate to merge ABAC's "Tour of Arlington" even with the memorial ride. He also advises that Bedford does not to his knowledge have a Bikeway event policy but does have a parade policy.

Jes Slavin says that Galen Mook is already coordinating directly with Lexington and Bedford, as well as Arlington. A verbal approval was received from the Arlington Police Department (APD) and formal written approval is pending.

Muris Kobaslija observes that 100 riders making a rolling start would likely not be noticed; there are rides organized on Facebook with similar volumes and no official notification/approvals.

Christopher Tonkin says with respect to the Tri Town meeting that the agenda has already been set, but would likely accommodate discussing the memorial ride under a broad category of issues affecting the Bikeway.

Jes Slavin will share ride registration information as soon as all required approvals are received.

## 7. Report from COBWEB Officer.

No officer was able to attend.

## 8. TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) report

Scott Smith that TAC is attending Bikeway/Mystic Valley parkway meeting as mentioned by Daniel. TAC is reviewing Complete Streets prioritization plan, but focused more on sidewalks than bike facilitation right now.

TAC voted to recommend making the lower section of Washington St. one-way for motor vehicles but continuing to allow two-way bicycle traffic.

## 9. Tour of Arlington for 2022

Christopher Tonkin mentions that this has tentatively been scheduled for May 22, a week before MassBike's Charlie Proctor ride. He asks if we should discuss routes, or possibly combine with the MassBike event?

Doug Mayo-Wells observes that having two events in such close proximity might negatively affect turnout for both, since many people would decide between them rather

than do both. He also thinks that the ride should primarily continue to honor Charlie Proctor, not become Arlington-centric.

Muris Kobaslija mentions that since the Charlie Proctor ride is capped at 100 participants, Arlington residents could potentially be unable to participate. We could consider other dates more than a week apart.

Scott Smith suggests we reschedule the Tour of Arlington to Summer or Fall.

Jim Cartreine observes that Fall could provide an opportunity to see colorful leaves.

Christopher Tonkin mentions that the Tour of Arlington should not be the same day as Town Day.

Scott Smith says that the 2022 Town Day date has not yet been announced.

## 10. Bikes not Bombs bike collection event at the DPW on April 30

Recycling Coordinator Charlotte Milan is organizing a Bikes not Bombs collection event at DPW and requested ABAC's involvement, but not clear what form involvement might take. Should have clarification for the April meeting, before the event.

## 11. Development of new rubric for road markings, bike lanes with and without protection

Scott Smith confirms the initial meeting was held. Old design will be reviewed as a first step, but that review has not completed yet.

## 12. Pilot project for bike classes at the Gibbs School

Scott confirms that Gibbs school has not responded.

Christopher Tonkin observes that we are obligated to spend the funding we have, and will pursue it with the Safe Routes to School coordinator.

## 13. Bikeway book - suggestion from Lauren Heffernon. Arlington or Tri-town working group?

Christopher Tonkin describes the proposal as a website where people could take photographs of the bikeway, people on the bikeway, as an ongoing art project, but would require some form of curation/moderation.

## 14. Tales from the Bikeway, matters arising from the Bikeway e.g. encroachment and center line markings.

Petru Sofio mentions that many students are using the bike because the main entrance for Arlington High School is on Mass Ave. He airs concerns about the safety of the Mass Ave entrance with vehicles dropping off students entering and exiting the bike lanes. He is pursuing possible quick-build solutions, possibly floating parking (i.e, off-the-curb, separated by a buffer with flex posts from the bike lane). He clarifies that the direct connection from the Bikeway to AHS is not expected to be complete until 2025. Bike parking at the school is also inadequate both in quantity and security (wheel locks vs. frame locks), a bike theft occurred just today.

Jack Johnson mentions meeting former committee member Jeff Roth, who greets the committee and is still active in cycle advocacy in Belmont.

Petru mentions that Belmont is proposing floating parking/separated bike lanes on Concord Avenue in front of Belmont High School. Have supporting data of current biking numbers (120+ in September, June) as well as broad student support (50% of students indicated they would bike if separated lanes/floating parking was available). Hoping to implement this summer.

## 15. Tracking "Scary Moments" as in Cambridge

See: <https://www.cambridgebikesafety.org/2018/01/21/scary-moments-project>

and

<http://thecreativeexchange.org/projects/near-miss-project.html>

Christopher Tonkin is interested not so much in providing a forum as a way to track "hot spots" in Town. Would like to work with Doug Mayo-Wells on this, review the Cambridge site and see what categories we might want to use and bring a proposal back to the committee.

Len Greenberg suggests framing as "what I learned, what I do differently" as opposed to emphasizing the negative "scary moments."

Christopher Tonkin is primarily interested in getting geographic data that can be used to identify areas of concern to raise with APD and others.

Action item: Christopher Tonkin and Doug Mayo-Wells will discuss possible technical approaches.

## 16. Bikeway trash pickup

Scheduled for Sunday April 24th, to coincide with Eco week.

Action item: Christopher Tonkin will contact recycling coordinator Charlotte Milan re: arranging for collected trash to be picked up.

## 17. Tri Town Meeting Agenda

See: <https://www.lexingtonma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf7101/f/uploads/2022-03-22-lbac-remote.pdf>

Christopher Tonkin confirms that Galen Mook has been added to the meeting, and reviews the meeting details and proposed agenda.

Doug Mayo-Wells suggests (via chat) that the Charlie Proctor Memorial ride could be discussed as part of the "Regional Events and Opportunities" item on the agenda.

Scott Smith adds that we could also explore a social event between the Bikeway communities.

## 18. Pavement Issues on the Bikeway at Alewife

Doug Mayo-Wells says that Dave Rogers' office was very responsive and a warning cone was installed almost immediately, but the cone has now been removed. Rogers' office indicated they would pursue a more permanent fix with MassDOT, no further update yet. The Town Manager also expressed strong interest in addressing the pavement gap, so following up there might be helpful. The Minuteman Survey plan has an appendix specifically dealing with that area of the bikeway.

Scott Smith and Christopher Tonkin note that multiple injuries have already occurred over the last several years, due to the general poor condition of the Bikeway (and the wooden footbridge).

## 19. Other Business

Petru Sofio provides an update on bike lane plans in Porter Square, between Beech and Roseland, which will likely be installed in May. Some residents and local businesses have expressed opposition, so some compromises are being made on how



separated the bike lanes are. Flex posts are also being added to protect cyclists turning onto Somerville Ave from Mass Ave (a concrete barrier option is also being discussed).

Jack Johnson asks about the removal of the ghost bike memorial for Charlie Proctor.

Petru Sofio explains that the bike was damaged by a snowplow, and was removed for the winter to prevent further damage. It will be reinstalled within the next few weeks.

Doug Mayo-Wells notes that MBTA has removed the trackless trolley buses from service as of this week, and asks if the Porter Square plan has been adjusted to reflect that trackless trolley operation is no longer a requirement.

Petru Sofio explains that the plans have not been changed, the wires are still present, and MBTA does not have a timeline for removing them. A future project will address median removal, new traffic signal, but on a 3- to 5-year timeframe, not as a quick build effort.

Doug Mayo-Wells asks if ABAC should be added to the list of local bike groups maintained by the Boston Cyclists Union (which lists other groups like Somerville Bike Community and Cambridge Bike Safety).

Christopher Tonkin says it's a good idea but we should first establish an organizational contact email for ABAC, rather than a personal email address.

Scott Smith asks about the intended lifetime of ghost bike memorials.

Petru Sofio says that MassBike intends to maintain it indefinitely. Ghost bikes remain on Commonwealth Avenue as a memorial, even following complete reconstruction.

Christopher Tonkin moves to adjourn

Scott Smith seconds; motion carries, none opposed

Adjourned